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IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend Claims 1, 2, 9, 10, 17, and 18 as follows:

1. (currently amended) A pre-mix for a syntactic phenolic foam composition, the premix comprising:

thermoplastic microspheres selected from the group comprising thermally expandable microspheres and thermally expanded microspheres, the microspheres comprising a thermoplastic polymer shell made of a homopolymer or copolymer of 100 to 25, for example 93 to 40, parts by weight of a nitrile-containing, ethylenically unsaturated monomer, or a mixture thereof; and 0 to 75, for example 7 to 60, parts by weight of a non-nitrile-containing, ethylenically unsaturated monomer, or a mixture thereof; and a propellant, or a mixture thereof, trapped within the thermoplastic polymer shell;

and one of either

a highly reactive phenolic resole resin, the resin being obtainable by reacting a substituted or unsubstituted phenol and an aldehyde in the presence of an alkaline catalyst at a temperature of no more than 65°C and then neutralising to a pH of 5.5 – 6.6 ~~capable of fully crosslinking at temperatures between 15°C and 25°C, optionally in the presence of up to ten times its own weight in water, and having, typically, a free phenol content of 12-15% (w/w)~~;

or

an acidic catalyst for curing the phenolic resole resin.

2. (currently amended) The pre-mix of claim 1, in which the highly reactive phenolic resole resin is obtainable by reacting a substituted or unsubstituted phenol and an aldehyde, preferably formaldehyde, in the presence of an alkaline catalyst, preferably sodium hydroxide, at a temperature of no more than ~~65°C, preferably no more than~~ 60±2°C, ~~more~~ preferably no more than about 60°C, before neutralisation of the catalyst.

3. (previously presented) The pre-mix of claim 1, in which the phenolic resole resin has a molecular weight of no greater than 1000 daltons.

4. (original) The pre-mix of claim 1, in which the acidic catalyst is selected from the group comprising a strong organic acid, an ester of a strong organic acid, a weak inorganic acid, an ester of a weak inorganic acid, and a mixture thereof, preferably from the group comprising a weak inorganic acid, an ester of a weak inorganic acid and a mixture thereof, more preferably from the group comprising a phosphate ester, phosphoric acid and a mixture thereof.

5. (original) The pre-mix of claim 4, in which the acidic catalyst additionally comprises a strong organic acid, preferably *p*-toluene sulphonic acid.

6. (original) The pre-mix of claim 1, in which the at least one nitrile-containing ethylinically unsaturated monomer is selected from the group comprising acrylonitrile, methacrylonitrile, α -chloroacrylonitrile, α -ethoxyacrylonitrile, fumaroacrylonitrile, crotoacrylonitrile and a mixture thereof, of which acrylonitrile or methacrylate is preferred.

7. (original) The pre-mix of claim 1, in which the at least one non-nitrile-containing, ethylinically unsaturated monomer is selected from the group comprising of acrylic esters, methacrylic esters, vinyl chloride, vinylidene chloride, vinylidene dichloride, vinyl pyridine, vinyl esters, styrenes and derivatives and mixtures thereof, of which vinylidene chloride and / or vinyl chloride are preferred.

8. (original) The pre-mix of claim 1, in which the propellant is a volatile liquid selected from the group comprising short chain alkanes and isoalkanes and mixtures, preferably selected from the group comprising isopentane, isobutane, n-butane, pentane and a mixture thereof.

9. (currently amended) A syntactic phenolic foam composition comprising:

a highly reactive phenolic resole resin, the resin being obtainable by reacting a substituted or unsubstituted phenol and an aldehyde in the presence of an alkaline catalyst at a temperature

of no more than 65°C and then neutralising to a pH of 5.5 – 6.6 ~~capable of fully crosslinking at temperatures between 15°C and 25°C, optionally in the presence of up to ten times its own weight in water, and having, typically, a free phenol content of 12-15% (w/w)~~;

an acidic catalyst for curing the phenolic resole resin; and

thermoplastic microspheres selected from the group comprising thermally expandable microspheres and thermally expanded microspheres, the microspheres comprising a thermoplastic polymer shell made of a homopolymer or copolymer of 100 to 25, for example 93 to 40, parts by weight of a nitrile-containing, ethylenically unsaturated monomer, or a mixture thereof; and 0 to 75, for example 7 to 60, parts by weight of a non-nitrile-containing, ethylenically unsaturated monomer, or a mixture thereof; and a propellant, or a mixture thereof, trapped within the thermoplastic polymer shell.

10. (currently amended) The syntactic phenolic foam composition of claim 9, in which the highly reactive phenolic resole resin is obtainable by reacting a substituted or unsubstituted phenol and an aldehyde, preferably formaldehyde, in the presence of an alkaline catalyst, preferably sodium hydroxide, at a temperature of no more than ~~65°C, preferably no more than~~ 60±2°C, ~~more~~ preferably no more than about 60°C.

11. (previously presented) The syntactic phenolic foam composition of claim 9, in which the phenolic resole resin has a molecular weight of no greater than 1000 daltons.

12. (previously presented) The syntactic phenolic foam composition of claim 9, in which the acidic catalyst is selected from the group comprising a strong organic acid, an ester of a strong organic acid, a weak inorganic acid, an ester of a weak inorganic acid, and a mixture thereof, preferably from the group comprising a weak inorganic acid, an ester of a weak inorganic acid and a mixture thereof, more preferably from the group comprising a phosphate ester, phosphoric acid and a mixture thereof.

13. (original) The syntactic phenolic foam composition of claim 12, in which the acidic catalyst additionally comprises a strong organic acid, preferably *p*-toluene sulphonic acid.

14. (original) The syntactic phenolic foam composition of claim 9, in which the at least one nitrile-containing ethylinically unsaturated monomer is selected from the group comprising acrylonitrile, methacrylonitrile, α -chloroacrylonitrile, α -ethoxyacrylonitrile, fumaroacrylonitrile, crotoacrylonitrile and a mixture thereof, of which acrylonitrile or methacrylate is preferred.

15. (original) The syntactic phenolic foam composition of claim 9, in which the at least one non-nitrile-containing, ethylinically unsaturated monomer is selected from the group comprising acrylic esters, methacrylic esters, vinyl chloride, vinylidene chloride, vinylidene dichloride, vinyl pyridine, vinyl esters, styrenes and derivatives and mixtures thereof, of which vinylidene chloride and / or vinyl chloride are preferred.

16. (original) The syntactic phenolic foam composition of claim 9, in which the propellant is a volatile liquid selected from the group comprising short chain alkanes and isoalkanes and mixtures thereof, preferably from the group comprising isopentane, isobutane, n-butane, pentane and a mixture thereof.

17. (currently amended) A process for preparing the syntactic phenolic foam composition of claim 8, the process comprising:
either curing the pre-mix of claim 1 in the presence of the other of

the acidic catalyst for curing the phenolic resole resin;

or

the highly reactive phenolic resole resin, the resin being otabinable by reacting a substituted or unsubstituted phenol and an aldehyde in the presence of an alkaline catalyst at a temperature of no more than 65°C and then neutralising to a pH of 5.5 – 6.6 ~~capable of fully crosslinking at temperatures between 15°C and 25°C, optionally in the presence of up to ten times its own weight in water, and having, typically, a free phenol content of 12-15% (w/w)~~;
or curing [[a]] the highly reactive phenolic resole resin, the resin being obtainable by reacting

a substituted or unsubstituted phenol and an aldehyde in the presence of an alkaline catalyst at a temperature of no more than 65°C and then neutralising to a pH of 5.5 – 6.6 ~~capable of fully crosslinking at temperatures between 15°C and 25°C, optionally in the presence of up to ten times its own weight in water, and having, typically, a free phenol content of 12-15% (w/w)~~;

an acidic catalyst for curing the phenolic resole resin; and

thermoplastic microspheres, the microspheres being selected from the group comprising thermally expandable microspheres and thermally expanded microspheres, the microspheres comprising a thermoplastic polymer shell made of a homopolymer or copolymer of 100 to 25, for example 93 to 40, parts by weight of a nitrile-containing, ethylenically unsaturated monomer, or a mixture thereof; and 0 to 75, for example 7 to 60, parts by weight of a non-nitrile-containing, ethylenically unsaturated monomer, or a mixture thereof; and a propellant, or a mixture thereof, trapped within the thermoplastic polymer shell.

18. (currently amended) The process of claim 17, in which the highly reactive phenolic resole resin is obtainable by reacting a substituted or unsubstituted phenol and an aldehyde, preferably formaldehyde, in the presence of an alkaline catalyst, preferably sodium hydroxide, at a temperature of no more than ~~65°C, preferably no more than~~ 60±2°C, ~~more~~ preferably no more than about 60°C.

19. (previously presented) The process of claim 17, in which the phenolic resole resin has a molecular weight of no greater than 1000 daltons.

20. (original) The process of claim 17, in which the acidic catalyst is selected from the group comprising a strong organic acid, an ester of a strong organic acid, a weak inorganic acid, an ester of a weak inorganic acid, and a mixture thereof, preferably from the group comprising a weak inorganic acid, an ester of a weak inorganic acid and a mixture thereof, more preferably from the group comprising a phosphate ester, phosphoric acid and a mixture thereof.

21. (original) The process of claim 20, in which the acidic catalyst additionally comprises a strong organic acid, preferably *p*-toluene sulphonic acid.

22. (original) The process of claim 17, in which the at least one nitrile-containing ethylinically unsaturated monomer is selected from the group comprising acrylonitrile, methacrylonitrile, α -chloroacrylonitrile, α -ethoxyacrylonitrile, fumaroacrylonitrile, crotoacrylonitrile and a mixture thereof, of which acrylonitrile or methacrylate is preferred.

23. (original) The process of claim 17, in which the at least one non-nitrile-containing, ethylinically unsaturated monomer is selected from the group comprising of acrylic esters, methacrylic esters, vinyl chloride, vinylidene chloride, vinylidene dichloride, vinyl pyridine, vinyl esters, styrenes and derivatives and mixtures thereof, of which vinylidene chloride and / or vinyl chloride are preferred.

24. (original) The process of claim 17, in which the propellant is a volatile liquid selected from the group comprising short chain alkanes and isoalkanes and mixtures thereof, preferably from the group comprising isopentane, isobutane, n-butane, pentane and a mixture thereof.

25. (previously presented) The pre-mix of claim 2, in which the phenolic resole resin has a molecular weight of no greater than 1000 daltons.

26. (previously presented) The syntactic phenolic foam composition of claim 10, in which the phenolic resole resin has a molecular weight of no greater than 1000 daltons.

27. (previously presented) The syntactic phenolic foam composition of claim 10, in which the acidic catalyst is selected from the group comprising a strong organic acid, an ester of a strong organic acid, a weak inorganic acid, an ester of a weak inorganic acid, and a mixture thereof, preferably from the group comprising a weak inorganic acid, an ester of a weak inorganic acid and a mixture thereof, more preferably from the group comprising a phosphate ester, phosphoric acid and a mixture thereof.

28. (previously presented) The process of claim 18, in which the phenolic resole resin has a molecular weight of no greater than 1000 daltons.